

**Minutes of the Regular Session  
of the Salem School Committee  
Monday, December 16, 2024  
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.  
Hybrid Meeting**

**Members Present:** Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Amanda Campbell, Beth Anne Cornell, AJ Hoffman, Mary Manning, and Veronica Miranda

**Others in Attendance:** Superintendent Zrike and Assistant Superintendent Pauley

**Members Absent:** Vice Chair Cruz

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and informed the public that the docket contains the public participation procedure and how to access Spanish interpretation.

**Approval of Agenda**

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Campbell seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell voted YES

Vice Chair Cruz ABSENT

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning voted YES

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 absent.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee meeting held on December 2, 2024
2. Approval of Overnight Field Trip in Boston for Harvard Model UN Conference
3. Approval of February 2026 Belize Field Trip
4. Approval of FY25 Warrants:
  1. 12/05/2024 - \$567,913.13
  2. 12/12/2024 - \$503,729.00

Member Campbell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Student Representative Report**

Student Representative Qualkenbush said that the poll about whether to have the graduation at the Bertram Field or Salem Commons was sent to students by email earlier during the day. In response to Member Cornell, Student Representative Qualkenbush said that the reason the graduation location is being polled is because some students think that the Bertram field would be a better location because of less traffic. Superintendent Zrike said that once the results are available, the district will support it. Superintendent Zrike added that he would forward to Student Representative Qualkenbush the names of students from New Liberty Innovation School who expressed interest in joining the Student Advisory Committee so that they can be interviewed.

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### **1. Superintendent Self-Evaluation**

Superintendent Zrike provided some information about his self-evaluation. The evaluation has two parts. The first part is the rubric for superintendents from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) which consists of instructional leadership; management and operations; family and community engagement; and professional culture. Superintendent Zrike provided his reflections, successes and areas for growth. The second part is a series of goals that need to be set every year which consists of the student learning goal, professional growth goal and district improvement goal. Superintendent Zrike continued that he provided the goals and a series of evidence to show how he did relative to the goals. Superintendent Zrike said that the School Committee would need to review the progress towards the goals that he set for the year and the overall evaluation of his performance as Superintendent. Superintendent Zrike added that after the break, the public dashboard related to the strategic plan would be ready to be placed on the website. The dashboard will show the measures of success and how the district is performing.

#### **2. Human Resource Staffing Update**

Director of Human Resources, Dr. Jill Conrad, provided a presentation on the human resources department as well as information on diversification, retention and goals.

In response to Member Manning, Dr. Conrad said that DESE requires staff on waivers to show continuous progress towards their licensure. Member Manning asked if there was a limit as to how many staff members can be on a waiver. Member Campbell responded that DESE has no requirement for having a specific number or percentage of staff on waivers. In response to the status of retired teachers coming back to substitute, Dr. Conrad said that the information about the increase in the compensation rate has been publicized and there are now about 5 or 6 retired teachers who are doing substitute work where previously there were none.

Member Manning asked for the number of transfer requests which originate from the teachers and those that originate from the principal. Dr. Conrad responded that the Human Resource Department only receives the Personnel Action Form (PAF) from the Principal which does not have that information. Teachers who want to transfer also apply for the jobs posted online.

Superintendent Zrike said that there are pathways for staffing. One of which is “Grow Your Own” for students to become teachers. The district is working with the Smith Family Foundation and Latinos for Education in this regard. Superintendent Zrike added that the district is also looking into early college pathways and Salem State University has been involved with it. There is some funding available. The challenge is that not many students are interested in becoming teachers, and so some incentives are needed to encourage students to pursue teaching. The other pathway is an apprenticeship model with Middlesex Community College which will help paraprofessional and school related personnel to obtain their associates degree by providing them with some credit for their work experience. The program will consist of night courses at no charge. Superintendent Zrike said that the Lowell Public Schools has a model of this program which the district is trying to replicate. The district is working with the Salem Teachers Union to find out more about this opportunity.

As for the retention of staff of color, Superintendent Zrike said that together with Laura Assade, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Engagement (DEIE), they found that the culture in some buildings is not right for staff of color and they have voiced that it is not a healthy place for them. There are differences in buildings as some places have large numbers of staff of color because the culture is right. Superintendent Zrike said that Ms. Assade started to have meetings at the different schools to hear directly from staff. Superintendent Zrike added that the district is now adding support at certain schools. About a quarter of the staff at Salem Public Schools are staff of color. Superintendent Zrike said more work is needed as there are not enough teachers and administrators of color. Superintendent Zrike continued that we have to invest in people from the community so that they would become teachers.

In response to Ms. Campbell, Superintendent Zrike said that his concern with the Massachusetts Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) is that they are focusing on those who already have an undergraduate degree. Ms. Campbell will look into it. Dr. Conrad said the district is considering which pipeline program to focus on as there is limited time and staff capacity to manage it. In response to Mayor Pangallo, Dr. Conrad said that there are about 75 teachers on waivers of the total 500 teachers in the district which is roughly 15%. There are figures set in the strategic plan for this matter.

### **3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Update**

Superintendent Zrike said there is one more public meeting in Spanish about grade configuration for the new high school on January 13, 2025. Interpretation in English will be available. The next Building Committee meeting would be on Thursday, December 16 where the education plan will be discussed. Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that four other community sessions have been already held. Superintendent Zrike will share some notes with the School Committee from his meeting with the parent advisory group and the teacher advisory group.

**4. Finance and Operations Report**

Assistant Superintendent Pauley said that principals and department heads have been asked to think about what is needed for the FY 26 budget while waiting for the figures from Chapter 70 which will be available in January once the Governor releases the budget. Assistant Superintendent Pauley added that Member Manning and herself are working on the Finance Subcommittee timeline which will be brought to the School Committee in the new year. Superintendent Zrike commented that the Parent Advisory Group whose members include parents who are auditors had a lot of questions about the budget as they are fully aware that this would be a difficult fiscal year and wanted to help with the decision-making process. Superintendent Zrike added that they voiced that the district needed to do more public relations efforts about how well things are going in the Collins Middle School.

**Subcommittee Reports**

- 1. Finance Subcommittee**  
No report at this time.
- 2. Personnel Subcommittee**  
No report at this time.
- 3. Building and Grounds Subcommittee**  
No report at this time.
- 4. Curriculum Subcommittee**  
No report at this time.
- 5. Policy Subcommittee**  
No report at this time.

**Motions and Resolutions**

**1. Policy 5103 Controlled Choice Student Assignment - First Reading**

Member Cornell said that Deputy Superintendent Carbone and DEIE Director, Laura Assade advised the subcommittee that the policy should not have specific dates in order to make the process smoother and easier for families, and to make it easier for the

district to assign students.

Member Cornell made an amended motion to approve Policy 5103 for first reading and to authorize the administration to implement the changes in the policy prior to subsequent reads. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

**2. Resolution to Affirm Equity Statement**

Mayor Pangallo said that there was a request at the previous meeting to affirm both the equity statement and the LGBTQ+ inclusion statement.

Member Miranda made a motion to affirm both the statements which were provided in the packet. Member Campbell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

**3. Resolution to Affirm LGBTQ+ Inclusion Statement**

This matter was addressed together with the resolution above.

**Announcements**

Superintendent Zrike said that the district is getting some new information about the graduation requirements following the vote on the 2024 ballot “Question 2: Eliminating the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) graduation requirement” which recently passed. Although the MCAS will still be administered, it cannot be used as a graduation requirement any longer. There is work that school districts need to do in relation to the new guidance. Superintendent Zrike added that the School Committee would need to certify the new graduation requirements which will be local. Superintendent Zrike continued that there will be many questions that need to be answered for students and families including former students who did not pass the MCAS. Superintendent Zrike said that there are many unanswered questions right now but that he would inform the School Committee as soon as DESE and the district have more information.

Member Manning reminded that the district has to be prepared to support students and staff who might be affected by the recent school shooting incident.

**Adjournment**

Member Campbell made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 pm. Member Miranda seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

***Shirley Dorai***

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent